



DARPA Urban Challenge

*Countdown to Competition
Offers Compelling Story Lines*

The DARPA Grand Challenge robotic vehicle competition has captured imaginations around the world. The innovations, memorable personalities, life-saving technologies, and sheer magnitude of the 2004 and 2005 Grand Challenges have generated worldwide news coverage, with hundreds of media outlets reporting on history in the making.

The Challenge

Fifteen autonomous ground vehicles attempted the first Grand Challenge, on a 142-mile desert course between Barstow, California and Primm, Nevada in March 2004. None finished the course and the \$1 million cash prize was unclaimed. Eighteen months later, four autonomous vehicles successfully completed a 132-mile desert route in southern Nevada under the required 10-hour limit, and a \$2 million prize was awarded to "Stanley" from Stanford University.

The 2007 Urban Challenge builds on the excitement of the first two Grand Challenges to accelerate the development of autonomous vehicles that will someday perform hazardous tasks on the battlefield with limited human involvement. But the third Challenge features an added twist.

To succeed in the Urban Challenge, teams' robots must perform like cars with drivers and safely conduct simulated battlefield supply missions on a 60-mile urban area course. They must obey traffic laws while merging into traffic, navigating traffic circles, negotiating busy intersections and avoiding obstacles in fewer than six hours. The urban setting adds considerable complexity to the challenge faced by the robotic vehicles, and replicates the environment in which many of today's battlefield missions are conducted. The Urban Challenge 2007 will take place at the former George Air Force Base in Victorville, Calif. Teams will qualify for the main event during the National Qualification Event, October 26-31, 2007.

Story Angles

Media that covered the first two Grand Challenges found that the competition offers a wide range of potential news hooks, and the 2007 Urban Challenge promises to once again provide a variety of compelling, newsworthy story lines such as those listed below.

- Saving Lives, Reducing Injuries on the Battlefield
- Unique Business Model
- Non-Traditional Players
- Human Interest and the Stories Behind the Teams
- Commercial Applications
- DARPA Heritage of Excellence



The 2007 Urban Challenge promises to offer a wealth of compelling, newsworthy story lines as the program enters its next chapter. Teams and organizers are already hard at work.



Funding and Prizes

In 2001, Congress mandated that by 2015, one-third of the operational combat ground vehicles should be unmanned. Congress authorized the Department of Defense (DoD) and DARPA to award cash prizes as a means of recognizing outstanding achievements in Defense-related research and development.

DARPA developed a two-pronged approach for the Urban Challenge's funding and prizes. Eighty-nine teams have entered the competition, representing large and small companies, universities, and two high schools. As of August 2007, the field was narrowed to 36 teams after 53 received site visits that demonstrated vehicles' autonomous abilities.

In the Urban Challenge, the vehicle that successfully completes the mission the fastest in fewer than six hours is awarded a \$2 million prize; second place wins \$1 million; and third place wins \$500,000.

About DARPA

DARPA's mission is to maintain the technological superiority of the U.S. military and prevent technological surprise from harming our national security. DARPA sponsors revolutionary, high-payoff research that leads to innovative new military capabilities.

The Milestones

September 2006:

11 Teams Selected to Receive Seed Funding

October 2006:

89 Competitors Announced

May 2007:

Site Visits Announced

June/July 2007:

On-Site Inspections of Vehicles by Urban Challenge Organizers

August 9, 2007:

36 Semi-finalists Announced

October 26-31, 2007:

National Qualification Event at the former George Air Force Base, Victorville, Calif.

November 3, 2007:

Urban Challenge Event at the former George Air Force Base, Victorville, Calif.

CONTACT

For inquiries, background, information on teams or the latest news releases or updates, contact:

Don Shipley (dshipley@stratacomm.net)
or Johanna Spangenberg Jones
(jjones@stratacomm.net)
202-289-2001



check the website at www.darpa.mil/grandchallenge